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Abstract

In 1969 the University of South Dakota set up a program of T-Group Experiences for the leaders of practicum groups. Relationships between the leaders as well as between the leaders and their groups were noted. Some fall out from the T-Group to the practicum group was observed. Inter-personal communication increased within practicum groups and a reduction of defensive responses to tape criticism was noted. Recommendations for the use of T-Groups at the same time as the leading of practicum groups are given. The author supports a T-Group experience and feels that the program described was successful. (Author/KJ)

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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE EXTENSIONS OF COUNSELORS T-GROUP EXPERIENCES INTO THEIR WORK WITH OTHER GROUPS

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The Institute program at the University of South Dakota during the summer of 1968 offered unique opportunities to examine the possible effects of intensive T-Group experience on practicum group leaders. The structure of the program was such that one intact T-Group of eight persons became also an intact Practicum group which met together frequently to discuss their group leading experience, to play tape recordings of the Practicum group sessions, and interact in critique sessions with each other. In addition, the team approach to leading Practicum groups offered opportunities to examine relationships of a team of two people who were leading a group and who were also in the same T-Group during the same period of time.

As would be expected there were very provocative occurrences during the eight week Institute session and it is the purpose of this paper to discuss relationships between the T-Group and Practicum experiences observed by the author as well as positive and negative effects of this unique program.

There was, as was expected, some fallout from the T-Group to the Practicum group. The most fallout, of course, was observed in the earlier period of time during the Institute when the T-Group members were experiencing some frustration and hostility towards each other. For the most part, however, the hostility did not carry over into the Practicum groups, but some frustration did. It is quite probable that the T-Group leaders were able to assist the group members in working through the earlier stages, thereby effecting a minimum of transference of interpersonal hostility to the Practicum situation. In addition,

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this Practicum group leader structured the differences between T-Group and Practicum at the beginning of the Institute, suggesting that problems relating to T-Group should be taken to the T-Group rather than to the Practicum group, and vice-versa. During the latter part of the Institute, however, when the T-Groups were in a more cohesive stage, there was more fallout and less need to maintain separateness of T-Group and Practicum. There were times when the Practicum groups appeared to want to communicate on an inter-personal level rather than merely about Practicum experiences. This level of communication was allowed in as much as this author's approach to supervision of Practicum is one of allowing group dynamics and group process to occur and encouraging inter-personal communication at the feeling level.

There is no doubt that the T-Group experience was most valuable when considering the critique sessions of tapes in the group or by teams. The Institute enrollees were able with increasing absence of defensive responses to critique each other's tapes of Practicum sessions, and it appears that the team approach combined with the T-Group experiences is a most valuable combination of experiences. Each team was required to meet for a critique every week or two with the supervison in addition to listening together to each tape of each session. Rapport was strong in every team observed in this Practicum and team members appeared to come to the critique sessions ready to procede with discussion about each other's feelings and techniques in leading the groups. All in all this author suggests that the use of T-Groups at the same time as the leading of Practicum groups is a valuable experience with some recommendations.

1. It became increasingly clear that previous counseling training and individual counseling practicum alone did not prepare the enrollees to lead

groups. In addition, if the group leaders had not been through a group experience, they were not prepared at the emotional level as to expectation of what might occur in their groups. A person leading a group in a Practicum setting therefore should have experienced both the intellectual experience of theory and technique of group leading as well as the feeling experience of having undergone an intensive group experience himself. This necessitates a prerequisite of group experience, and a course in group theory and technique.

2. Some research should be done in the area of whether an intact T-Group should be an intact Practicum group, or whether stratification of members of T-Groups in practicum groups should be tried. Still another method of assigning Practicum groups would be to have the team leaders from different T-Groups.

3. The possibility of beginning the T-Group and didactic experience several weeks before the Practicum group leading experiences begin is suggested. This would allow for some intellectual and theoretical preparation as well as for beginnings of rapport between enrollees.

4. The Practicum supervison should be aware of and exhibit concern for so-called openness and confrontation exhibited at certain stages of the T-Group which would carry over into the Practicum group experience. There seemed to be times when the group leaders in Practicum were much more open than the client members of the groups. This author wonders if at times the Practicum leaders did not "frighten" the group members with confrontation responses. However, along these same lines, it did seem that several groups did succeed almost in spite of the techniques of the leaders because the leaders were open and sincere with each other and with the members. As they gained experience in leading groups they became more comfortable in the group situation and this did seem to overcome lack of technique.

5. When consultants came into the group, they frequently presented techniques which are different from the ones used by regular T-Group leaders. Enrollees tried these new techniques on the practicum groups they were leading and at times these techniques did not necessarily fit into the particular stage of the group that they were leading. The Practicum, being the more didactic experience of the two, should provide for discussion of the various techniques of consultants and others with some realization of what the technique is supposed to do and when it should be done.

6. While the confidentiality within the T-Group must be maintained, this author suggests regular staff meetings between T-Group leaders and Practicum group leaders allowing for comparison of the level and stage of the T-Group activity which might affect Practicum. Care should be taken to maintain individual confidentiality but it appears that this could be maintained as a professional communication. T-Group leaders also might make use of colleagues for cross feedback.

In summary, this author supports a T-Group type experience as not only valuable but quite necessary for the prospective group leader in a Practicum situation. There remains some question as to whether it should occur at the same time and under the same administrative structure as this one was. However, in general this author observes that the program was quite successful.